



House of Representatives

File No. 732

General Assembly

February Session, 2014

(Reprint of File No. 404)

Substitute House Bill No. 5357
As Amended by House Amendment
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner
May 1, 2014

AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2014*) (a) As used in this section
2 and sections 10-198b and 10-220 of the general statutes, as amended by
3 this act:

4 (1) "Chronically absent child" means a child who is enrolled in a
5 school under the jurisdiction of a local or regional board of education
6 and whose total number of absences at any point during a school year
7 is equal to or greater than ten per cent of the total number of days that
8 such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year;

9 (2) "Absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence and
10 disciplinary absence, as defined by the State Board of Education
11 pursuant to section 10-198b of the general statutes, as amended by this
12 act, and an in-school suspension, as defined in section 10-233a of the
13 general statutes, that is greater than or equal to one-half of a school
14 day;

15 (3) "District chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of

16 chronically absent children under the jurisdiction of a local or regional
17 board of education in the previous school year divided by the total
18 number of children under the jurisdiction of such board for such
19 school year; and

20 (4) "School chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of
21 chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year
22 divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for
23 such school year.

24 (b) Each local and regional board of education that (1) has a district
25 chronic absenteeism rate of ten per cent or higher, or (2) has a school
26 under the jurisdiction of the board with a school chronic absenteeism
27 rate of fifteen per cent or higher, shall establish a district school
28 attendance review team to address chronic absenteeism at the school.
29 The district school attendance review team may consist of school
30 administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers
31 and representatives from community-based programs who address
32 issues related to student attendance by providing programs and
33 services to truants, as defined in section 10-198a of the general statutes,
34 as amended by this act, and chronically absent children and their
35 families. The district school attendance review team shall be
36 responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent
37 children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for
38 such truants and chronically absent children and making any
39 additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent
40 children and their families. The school attendance review team shall
41 meet at least monthly.

42 Sec. 2. Subsection (c) of section 10-220 of the general statutes is
43 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
44 *1, 2014*):

45 (c) Annually, each local and regional board of education shall
46 submit to the Commissioner of Education a strategic school profile
47 report for each school under its jurisdiction and for the school district

48 as a whole. The superintendent of each local and regional school
49 district shall present the profile report at the next regularly scheduled
50 public meeting of the board of education after each November first.
51 The profile report shall provide information on measures of (1) student
52 needs, (2) school resources, including technological resources and
53 utilization of such resources and infrastructure, (3) student and school
54 performance, including [truancy] the number of truants, as defined in
55 section 10-198a, as amended by this act, and chronically absent
56 children, as defined in section 1 of this act, (4) the number of students
57 enrolled in an adult high school credit diploma program, pursuant to
58 section 10-69, operated by a local or regional board of education or a
59 regional educational service center, (5) equitable allocation of resources
60 among its schools, (6) reduction of racial, ethnic and economic
61 isolation, and (7) special education. For purposes of this subsection,
62 measures of special education include (A) special education
63 identification rates by disability, (B) rates at which special education
64 students are exempted from mastery testing pursuant to section 10-
65 14q, (C) expenditures for special education, including such
66 expenditures as a percentage of total expenditures, (D) achievement
67 data for special education students, (E) rates at which students
68 identified as requiring special education are no longer identified as
69 requiring special education, (F) the availability of supplemental
70 educational services for students lacking basic educational skills, (G)
71 the amount of special education student instructional time with
72 nondisabled peers, (H) the number of students placed out-of-district,
73 and (I) the actions taken by the school district to improve special
74 education programs, as indicated by analyses of the local data
75 provided in subparagraphs (A) to (H), inclusive, of this subdivision.
76 The superintendent shall include in the narrative portion of the report
77 information about parental involvement and if the district has taken
78 measures to improve parental involvement, including, but not limited
79 to, employment of methods to engage parents in the planning and
80 improvement of school programs and methods to increase support to
81 parents working at home with their children on learning activities. For
82 purposes of this subsection, measures of truancy include the type of

83 data that is required to be collected by the Department of Education
 84 regarding attendance and unexcused absences in order for the
 85 department to comply with federal reporting requirements and the
 86 actions taken by the local or regional board of education to reduce
 87 truancy in the school district. Such truancy data shall be considered a
 88 public record for purposes of chapter 14.

89 Sec. 3. Section 10-198b of the general statutes is repealed and the
 90 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2014*):

91 On or before July 1, 2012, the State Board of Education shall define
 92 "excused absence", [and] "unexcused absence" and "disciplinary
 93 absence" for use by local and regional boards of education for the
 94 [purpose] purposes of carrying out the provisions of section 10-198a, as
 95 amended by this act, [and for the purpose of] reporting truancy,
 96 pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-220, as amended by this act,
 97 and calculating the district chronic absenteeism rate and the school
 98 chronic absenteeism rate, pursuant to section 1 of this act.

99 Sec. 4. Subsection (a) of section 10-198a of the general statutes is
 100 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
 101 *1, 2014*):

102 (a) For purposes of this section, section 10-220, as amended by this
 103 act, and section 1 of this act, "truant" means a child age five to eighteen,
 104 inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has four
 105 unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused
 106 absences from school in any school year.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	10-220(c)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	10-198b
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	10-198a(a)

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill, which (1) requires a local or regional board of education to form a district-wide school attendance review if certain chronic absenteeism measures are met and (2) requires each board of education to add the number of chronically absent children, as defined by the bill, to the annual strategic school profile, is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact as schools have the appropriate staff available to do so.

House "A" struck the underling bill and its associated fiscal impact and replaced it with the impact describe above.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5357 (as amended by House "A")******AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill requires a local or regional board of education to form a district-wide school attendance review team ("review team") if the school district has a:

1. 10% or greater district chronic absenteeism rate, or
2. 15% or greater chronic absenteeism rate at a single school.

Under the bill, a student is chronically absent if he or she is absent, at any point in the school year, more than 10% of the school days that he or she has been enrolled in the school that year. A school district's or individual school's chronic absentee rate is the percentage of the district's or school's students who are chronically absent. The absentee and enrollment numbers from the previous school year must be used for this calculation.

The bill requires each board of education to add the number of chronically absent children to the annual strategic school profile, which by law each district must provide for each of its schools and the district as a whole. It also specifies that the profile must state the number of truants rather than report on truancy in general. By law, a truant is a student with four or more unexcused absences in a month or 10 unexcused absences in any school year.

*House Amendment "A" (1) requires the review teams to review the cases of, and discuss interventions for, truants in addition to chronically absent students; (2) changes the definition of chronically absent child to mean a child who is absent, at any point in the school

year, more than 10% of the school days that he or she has been enrolled in the school rather than 18 or more unexcused absences as in the original file; (3) requires that excused, unexcused, disciplinary, and certain in-school suspensions count toward a child's absentee rate rather than just unexcused absences; and (4) makes other minor and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

DISTRICT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REVIEW TEAM

The review team must meet at least monthly and is responsible for (1) reviewing the cases of truant and chronically absent children, (2) discussing school interventions and community referrals as necessary, and (3) making any additional recommendations for truant and chronically absent children and their families.

Under the bill, the review team can consist of school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, and staff from community-based programs who provide programs and services to truants and chronically absent children and their families.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Under the bill, absence from school means (1) excused or unexcused absences, (2) disciplinary absences, and (3) in-school suspensions if the suspension is one-half of a school day or more.

By law, the State Board of Education (SBE) is required to define excused and unexcused absences (see BACKGROUND). The bill specifies that these definitions must be used to determine the chronic absenteeism rate at schools and districts.

The bill requires the SBE to also define "disciplinary absence." SBE, at the same time it defined excused and unexcused absences, defined disciplinary absences as those that result from school or district disciplinary action.

BACKGROUND

Excused and Unexcused Absences

The State Board of Education adopted definitions of excused and unexcused absences on June 27, 2012, as it was required to do by law.

The following are considered excused:

1. For absences one through nine, when the student provides written documentation (i.e., a signed note from parent or guardian) of the reason for the absence within 10 school days of the student's return to school.
2. For the 10th and any additional absences, the same written documentation is needed and only the following reasons suffice: (a) student illness (with appropriate verification from a medical professional), (b) observance of a religious holiday, (c) death in the family or other emergency beyond the family's control, (d) mandated court appearance, (e) lack of transportation that the district normally provides, or (f) extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the district in accordance with SDE guidance.

An absence is considered unexcused unless it meets one of the definitions of an excused absence or is a disciplinary absence. All other absences are unexcused. Disciplinary absences are absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action and are excluded from these definitions.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 32 Nay 1 (03/19/2014)